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Wilson, Thomas L.

A brief history of the  
cruelties and atrocities of the  
rebellion





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CITY OF WASHINGTON.

# A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE CRUELITIES AND ATROCITIES OF THE REBELLION.

COMPILED FROM THE MOST AUTHENTIC SOURCES, BY THOS. L. WILSON.

“Immediate efforts be made for a cessation of hostilities.”—*Peace and Disunion Platform of the Chicago Copperhead Convention.*

## TREATMENT OF PRISONERS OF WAR.

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The rule formerly was, to slay without mercy, or reduce to a state of abject bondage, the unfortunate captive of war. The men who perpetrated such cruel and bloody deeds, even in the darkest age, and places of the world, have been written in all history as barbarous, and their memory branded with infamy. Modern civilization and Christianity, amongst most nations, have induced a better method. How far their influence has been manifested, under the auspices of the rebel Government, the brief, well-authenticated statements of actual occurrences, recorded in the following pages will show :

Surgeon Honiston was taken prisoner at the first battle of Bull Run. He begged to be allowed to remain upon the field to take care of our wounded, but in vain. He stated that Dr. Dailey, of South Carolina, was sent to the field by Gen. Beauregard to take charge of our wounded, but would not allow us (Federal Surgeons) to perform operations upon our own men, but had them performed by his Assistants, young men—some of them with no more knowledge of what they attempted, than an apothecary's clerk: “they performed the operations in a most horrible manner, some of them absolutely frightful;” there was no attention paid to the wounded, and, it was impossible for them to get anything to eat; they lay through a drenching rain on Monday, the battle having occurred on Sunday, and a sultry sun on Tuesday, until Wednesday, before they were permitted to be removed, when their “wounds were completely alive with *larvæ*,” some lay on the field for five days. Let it be remembered, that this was at the outset of the contest, before repeated collisions had whetted the passions of the contending parties.

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Surgeon Swalen testifies, that he was on the battle-field ten or twelve days after the battle, and saw some of our men still unburied and entirely naked, having been robbed of their clothing by the rebels; (it seems unnatural that “HIGH-MINDED GENTLEMEN,” chivalry, would actually *steal*, unless driven to it by necessity, which could not have been the case so early in the history of the Confederacy;) some of our men were buried face downward—an intended disgrace. Some of the graves had been opened by pushing rails beneath the bodies to get the tops of the skulls to make drinking cups. One of these cups was found by a member of a New Jersey regiment, after our army advanced upon the forts, defended by “wooden guns,” and which had kept McClellan at bay for eighteen months.

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Dr. Ferguson, of New York, was fired upon when attending the

wounded, and after he told them who he was, they brutally shot him in the leg. When he was carried off the field the jolting of the ambulances so hurt him, that he involuntarily groaned, whereupon a rebel officer rode up to him and threatened to blow his brains out if he repeated "his noise."

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General Ricketts testifies that when he lay on the field wounded, the passing rebels called out, "knock out his brains, the d——d Yankee." He heard of many of the prisoners, who were bayoneted, and two or three shot after they arrived in Richmond.

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Senator Sprague, who went to recover the bodies of Col. Slocum and Major Ballou, testified that he was told, when searching the battle-ground, that the Colonel's body had been dug up, his head cut off, and his body burned. After thorough and repeated investigations, the Senator became fully satisfied that both of these gallant men did indeed suffer this unhallowed and barbarous rite of sepulchre at the hands of their own countrymen, who boast themselves gentlemen, *par excellence*, their chivalry, and that their's is the only genuine type of manhood on the face of God's green earth. The Senator corroborates the statement that many of our men were buried face downward, and similar outrages unheard of and unthought of, save among the unsanctified rites of pagan and savage nations. Heaven save us and the rest of mankind from such Christianity, and such civilization, if their's is the only genuine. An official report of Judge Advocate General Holt, dated March 27, 1863, gives a heart-rending picture of the barbarities of the rebels upon twenty-two Federal prisoners, captured near Chattanooga, Tenn. One of them was stripped, tied down to a stone, and whipped until life was nearly extinct. After whipping him, they brought a rope to hang him, but his life was finally spared. Eight of these men were hung, after having been tried by a court-martial and acquitted. But the authorities at Richmond over-ruled the court, and ordered them hung. From the breaking of the rope, after being sometime suspended, two of these unhappy victims were restored to consciousness; they begged for one hour for prayer and preparation for death, which was peremptorily refused, and the execution proceeded. What better is this than cowardly butchery? The remaining prisoners, reduced to fourteen, closely confined in jail at Atlanta, accidentally learned that it was determined by the Richmond government to hang them, and they laid a plan of escape. Eight succeeded, six entered our lines, two were never heard from. The following brief dispatch tells the story of the remaining six: "At the end of eleven months terminated their pitiless persecutions in the prisons of the South—persecutions begun and continued amid indignities and sufferings on their part, and atrocities on the part of the barbarous foe, which illustrates far more faithfully than any human language could express, the demoniac spirit of a revolt, every throb of whose life is a crime against the very race to which we belong."

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#### LIBBY PRISON.

At a meeting of Surgeons of the United States Army and Navy, a



report was prepared, November 26th, 1863, and sent to the President, which contained the following facts. About one thousand officers of all grades, and from both branches of the service, are confined in Libby prison, whose walls are unplastered, thus open to the full sweep of the winter winds, or closed with boards—rendering the place dark, dreary, and loathsome in the extreme. None of the private soldiers are furnished with bedding of any kind. Belle Island contains six thousand three hundred prisoners, whose condition is wretched beyond all description. An insufficient number of tents to protect the men from the cold and rain, no blankets nor bedding given them by their captors. Only one Surgeon was assigned to the Island, who makes but one visit a day, and then does not enter the enclosures of the men. Such as are too sick to walk, never see him; they are hurried off to the hospital when their condition is absolutely helpless. An officer of high standing, who visited the Island, says the men followed him in crowds, and in the most eager tones begged of him for bread; many literally starved to death. Some days as high as fifty died, and from no other apparent cause. Officers, for the most trivial offences, were confined for weeks in dark, damp dungeons. Men were shot by the guards for standing near and looking out of the windows. Some were shot, others wounded, by the wanton wretches, who stood their guns on the floor beneath and fired through the floor overhead. To such extremities were these unfortunate men driven, that in one instance a dog was killed and eaten; and the prisoners on the Island were known to hunt the gutters for bones, to suck from them nutriment to appease the terrible gnawings of hunger. These are facts, derived from personal observation, transpiring in a Christian community, among “high-toned gentlemen,” but written right across the rebel Confederacy, dark as midnight and revolting as despair.

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#### FORT PILLOW.

The most revolting of all barbarities was that of Fort Pillow. The War Committee, after thorough inquiry into the conduct of Forest, and his murderous associates, report that the atrocities committed were not the result of passions excited by the heat of the conflict, but of a policy deliberately decided upon and unhesitatingly announced. When the women and children were crossing the river by the aid of the Union gunboats, the rebel sharpshooters, mingled with and shielded by them, fired upon the officers and men. Like incarnate fiends as they are, they placed women in front of their lines as they moved upon the fort. They rushed into the fort during the time the flag of truce was flying, which is held sacred even by Turks and savages, and commenced an indiscriminate slaughter, sparing neither age nor sex, white nor black, soldier nor civilian, men, women nor children; of the latter, those not over ten years of age were made to face their murderers, and thus shot. The sick and wounded, while lying in their beds in the hospitals, were dragged out and butchered without mercy. Numbers of men were collected into groups or lines, and deliberately shot down, and those of the wounded near the river bank were brutally kicked into the river, where they were drowned, heaping insult and torture upon the vic-

tems of their diabolical cruelty. No barbarity which the most fiendish malignity could devise, was omitted by these incarnate demons. A mere child, which an officer had taken up behind him on his horse, was ordered to be put down and shot, which was done. The tents where the wounded lay were set on fire, and many of their occupants were consumed in the flames; those who escaped were shot down or had their brains beaten out by the cowardly ruffians. One man was deliberately nailed down to the floor of a tent, the tent fired, and he perished in the flames. Another was nailed to the side of a building, and it set on fire, and he also perished in the flames. These deeds of unutterable cruelty closed at night, only to be renewed next morning, when these brutes, for they cannot be called men, carefully sought among the dead in all directions for the wounded that were still alive.

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#### TREATMENT OF LOYAL MEN, AND THEIR SUFFERINGS FOR OPINION'S SAKE.

September 18, 1863, twenty or thirty rebels went in the night to the house of Marshal Glaze, a loyal man of Spring Creek, Virginia, and murdered John McMullen, Marshal Glaze, and a discharged Union soldier while asleep, three others making their escape. The same gang then visited the dwelling of a Mr. Noyes, a Union man near by, and attempted to persuade, finally to force, a young girl to accompany them for a vile purpose; upon refusal, they immediately shot her dead.—*Authority, Mr. McWater, Member House of Delegates, West Va., 1861.*

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In January, 1863, James Keith, with the 65th N. C. regiment, was ordered to arrest some men at Laurel Hill for seizing salt at Marshal, N. C. Before the regiment arrived, those engaged in the seizure fled, and the innocent had to suffer. Twelve persons were arrested, varying in their ages from seven to sixty, who protested their innocence and plead for a trial, which was promised. They were marched off, but had proceeded but a few miles when they were taken into a mountain gorge, and five of them ordered to kneel; a file of soldiers was drawn up in front of them, when, deaf to the agonizing cries for mercy, the protestations of their perfect innocence, of the promise of trial, and entreaties for a brief time for prayer and preparation for death, the order was given to "fire," which the soldiers hesitated to obey. Keith told them peremptorily to obey or he would exchange places with the prisoners. Again the order was given, and five men fell; five others were ordered to kneel, and of the number a little boy of twelve years, who plead with his executioners, "You shot my father in the face, please don't shoot me in the face," and covered his face with his hands. Five more fell at the order to fire, and among them was this child, wounded in both arms, and three of his brothers, dead; the little hero, at the feet of the inhuman officer, implored to be spared to his mother, who was deprived of a husband and three sons at his hands, but in vain. He was dragged back to the place of execution, and was sacrificed, pierced with eight balls; those in whom life was not extinct, were dispatched with pistols; the bodies were tumbled into one grave or hole, into which they were jammed by the feet of these godless wretches, who danced and shouted in their sacrilegious work as if at a carnival of devils. They then returned to Laurel Hill, and commenced torturing the wives of loyal men in order to discover where the salt was concealed. Mrs. S. Skelton and

Mrs. E. Skelton were whipped until the blood ran down their persons to the ground, then hung until life was almost extinct, then taken down. Martha White, an idiotic girl, was whipped, then tied to a tree by the neck, and left all day. Mrs. Riddle, aged eighty-five years, was inhumanly whipped, then robbed. Mrs. Sallie More, aged seventy, was whipped until blood ran to the ground. One woman, name forgotten, who had a child five or six weeks old, was tied to a tree in the snow, and her child placed in the open door in her sight, and she was told they both should perish.—*On the authority of Col. Crawford, Tenn.*

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After the battle of Gettysburg, the Unionists of North Carolina began to speak more freely, and revolt was feared; in consequence, a regiment of soldiers was sent to Randolph county to preserve order. The kind of order that was preserved may be known by the following atrocity, one of many committed upon the unprotected loyalists of that region: These soldiers decoyed a one-armed man, under pretence of employing him as a guide, into a piece of woodland, where his body was found several days after, completely riddled with bullets; he was heard a long distance begging and imploring for his life; from the marks of blood and foot-prints, it was believed that he was compelled to run round his tormentors, they shooting at him as he ran to see how many times they hit and not kill him.—*Authority, Bryan Tyson, Esq., author of "Ray of Light."*

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Champ Ferguson, the prince of fiends, and his gang, captured three white men and a negro in Fentress County, Tennessee, and tying them together, drove them to Wolf Run. On the way, these wretches gratified their savage propensities by thrusting sharpened splinters of wood into the flesh of their helpless victims, and cutting them off close to their bodies. To make them travel faster they pitched their bowie knives into them. When arrived at the run, the unfortunate men were put to slow torture by bayonets stuck into them, and cutting off pieces of their flesh, until the work of death was well nigh complete. Finally, gorged with this disgusting work, Ferguson dispatched one of the men by actually hacking him into pieces with his knife, and his comrades in guilt put an end to the torments of the remainder by the same means. This same man, Ferguson declared in a speech at Sparta, Tennessee, that he had already killed sixteen Lincolmites, and intended to kill enough to make twenty-five, then he was willing to die.—*Authority, Gen. J. B. Rogers, Tennessee.*

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In April, 1862, a man named Bright, sixty years old, living in Johnson County, Tennessee, with two sons and two nephews, was arrested by Col. Foulke's cavalry and marched into Ash County. There a grocery-keeper, a brother murderer, proposed to treat this band of "chivalry" with eight gallons of brandy, if they would hang the prisoners without trial. The proposal was eagerly accepted, and the company of five were hung to the first tree without ceremony.—*By authority of Col. Crawford, Tenn.*

In the later part of 1862, and early in 1863, the rebels in Mississippi conscripted all the men they could find between the ages of 18 and 60: the Unionists fled to the woods to escape the conscription, and the fiends set blood hounds on their track; by this inhuman method, many were captured and many nearly torn in pieces by these dogs before they could be rescued.

In Alabama the conscription was prosecuted with still greater severity. During the winter of 1862, a young girl, while carrying food to her father, hidden in a cave, was attacked by one of these dogs, and literally torn to pieces. Also two women, who were making their way to Tusculumbia, Franklin County, Alabama, were torn to pieces in the same way. In reference to the outrages committed in the above named States, General Dodge, in a letter to a friend, says: "That while their leaders, from the President down, boast of their carrying on this war in accordance with the laws that govern nations, a few simple facts will put them to the blush. Men and women are hung and shot, and hunted down and captured by blood hounds; fathers and husbands in the presence, and in spite of the tears and prayers of their wives and daughters, and many times with them, are hung or shot. Houses were burned over the heads of their inmates, and women and children turned out of doors, and the community solemnly warned not to receive or harbor them, at their peril." The General says that "hundreds of men, women, and children, gray haired men, and cripples on crutches, were constantly fleeing from the tender mercies of these 'high-toned gentlemen' into his lines—Corinth, Mississippi—for life and protection, simply and only for opinion's sake." Will "sympathizers" any longer doubt, or dare deny, that Union men, under the conscription, were hunted or captured and mangled by blood hounds! Talk about "arbitrary arrest" and "illegal imprisonment!"

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In May, 1861, a rebel command under Debrell and Jenkins, natives of Tenn., went from Austin, Texas, to destroy a German settlement near El Paso, of that State, consisting of two hundred and fifty souls. From eighty to one hundred of these ruffians, without the slightest provocation, attacked this peaceful, prosperous, and thoroughly loyal community, and it is not known that three persons escaped. Fathers, mothers, sisters, brothers, and helpless infants constituted one common scene of indiscriminate carnage, and houses, barns, and crops were burned and trampled from the face of the earth. *Authority, Gen. J. B. Rogers.* "Sympathizers" are horrified at any attempt to stop such work by "coercion." Will the American public endorse such doctrines, and their application?

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In March, 1863, Capt. Montgomery was kidnapped, and taken to a rebel camp on the Rio Grande, Texas. Here he was informed that he was to be hung, and mockingly ordered to say his prayers: a rope was placed about his neck, and he commanded to tell what he knew of the Federal forces. He refused—whereupon, he was hung up to a branch of a tree until nearly dead, then let down: when consciousness was restored, the same question was put, with the same result. He was then hung, where he remained until taken down, and buried by a friendly Mexican. When these cowardly murderers found it out, they disinterred the body, declaring that it should lay unburied, and thus rot. Capt. Bruin, of S. C., commanded this band of outlaws, and for this act of "bravery and good conduct," in hanging a defenceless man, was promoted, and now rejoices in the title of Major of the 1st Texas Cavalry. Why not call upon such men and their friends to guide the destinies of this great country for the next four years, and for all time? Why not?—*Colonel Stanley, of Texas.*

A letter dated Monterey, Mexico, Nov. 1862, from Vice Consul M. M. Kemmey, states, on the authority of an eye-witness, that twelve Unionists of Western Texas, provided with passports from the rebel Provost Marshal, were all massacred on the Neufces river, by a body of Texas rangers, but a short time previous to the above date. Also, a party of Germans were all killed, with one exception, who escaped wounded, by the same party. The Consul remarks—"You cannot imagine how Union men are treated in Texas; they are hung on the slightest suspicion."

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An official letter from Maj. Gen. Blunt, Oct. 7th, 1863, in reference to the massacre at Baxter Springs, Mo., says: "The body of Major Curtis, the son of Maj. Gen. Curtis, was found where thrown from his horse, shot through the head, evidently having been murdered after being taken prisoner." The same was the case with all the wounded, the members of the band, the officers' clerks and the teamsters. The murderers were a portion of Coppey's and Quantrell's command, disguised by Federal uniforms. About seventy were thus butchered by these worse than fiends.

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An official letter from Col. W. R. Penick, dated Independence, Mo., January 11th, 1863, says: "Private Johnson, of the artillery, was brought in dead to-day, the fifth murdered the last week. They were all wounded and killed afterwards, in the most horrible manner that fiends could devise. All were shot in the head, several had their faces fearfully cut, evidently with boot-heels; powder was exploded in one man's ear, and both ears cut off close to the head."

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In April, 1862, a party of rebel soldiers—if highwaymen can be thus dignified—on a tour of collecting conscripts, shot and instantly killed a poor deranged woman, Mrs. Ruth A. Rhea, on Lick Creek, in Green County, Tenn., because she attempted to drive them from her premises with a stick, when conscripting her only son and support.—*Authority of Col. Crawford.*

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In a letter to the Mayor of New Orleans, April 26th, 1862, Admiral Farragut says: "I shall speedily and severely punish any person or persons who shall commit such outrages as were witnessed yesterday—armed men firing upon helpless women and children, for giving expression to their pleasure at witnessing the old flag." These are the "gentlemen" soldiers we read of, formed out of the raw material called "chivalry."

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Mr. St. Clair, mate of the steamboat McRay, states that "in August, 1850, while his vessel was lying at the wharf near New Orleans, a German pedlar, who could scarcely understand or utter a sentence in English, was caught and hung to a lamp-post by a mob, for simply having in his possession photographs of Mr. Lincoln, then candidate for the Presidency, and not the least opposition was made by the police, nor any notice taken of it by the city authorities."

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During the engagement between the Federal gunboats and the rebel

batteries on White River, in Arkansas, a shot from one of their batteries exploded the boiler of the Mound City. To avoid death by scalding, the crew leaped overboard, for whose rescue small boats were immediately sent. The rebels fired large guns and musketry upon the struggling, drowning men, and upon the crews of the boats sent to their aid, as they did under similar circumstances in the harbor of Mobile, upon the crew and officers of the unfortunate Tecumseh. This was done under the eye of Admiral Davis, who distinctly saw the cowardly act, and remarks in his report, "that the country will contrast these barbarities of a savage enemy with the hundred efforts made by our own people to rescue the wounded and disabled, under like circumstances, in the engagement of the 6th."

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Rev. Mr. Angesev, of Miss., states that "he was seized by the rebels, heavily ironed, and, with eighty others, placed in a dungeon; my crime was that I defended the Union cause. While I was in prison, numbers were led out and shot. At first those in charge provided coffins; but the great number of executions exceeding the supply, they dug a trench, and made the man sit down on the brink, when a file of soldiers advanced and fired three balls into the head and three into the hearts of their victims; this was the mode of execution." He further states, that "he was himself hunted by bloodhounds, as were other Union men in that State."

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A full history of all these atrocities would fill volumes. But why continue the recital? Sufficent has been recounted in these brief pages to stamp these perfidious rebels as the most cruel and blood-thirsty wretches that ever disgraced mankind. The mind recoils in horror from the contemplation of the barbarities they have practiced upon our citizens and soldiers for no other crime than that of loving their country and their flag. But the civilized world will stand aghast at the fact that the recent Copperhead convention at Chicago was composed of men in full and shameless sympathy with the bloody and brutal tyrants at Richmond, who inspired and commanded the commission of the crimes and atrocities herein exposed and held up to the execration of civilization. The platform of Peace and Disunion there erected will forever stand out in history as the foulest blot upon our escutcheon, and will make our latest posterity to blush with shame and humiliation. This shame must be wiped out as far as possible by the loyal people by burying, in one common political grave, that atrocious platform of an ignominious and degrading peace, and the candidates who stand upon it, illustrating its infamy and its disloyalty.

**"Down with the traitor and up with the star!"**

New Book—Entitled, "Sufferings for a Free Government; or, a History of the Cruelties and Atrocities of the Rebellion."

This work has been carefully compiled and collated from official documents and other reliable sources, by Thomas L. Wilson, clerk in the Fourth Auditor's Office, Treasury Department, and embodies a thrilling history of the cruelties, tortures, and savage barbarities inflicted upon Union men, women, children, and Union soldiers in the Rebel States, since the first inauguration of the Rebellion by the Secessionists, who, as a people, lay claim to all the chivalry, refinement, and gallantry of the human race, to let them tell it; but whose savage propensities and extreme cruelties have never yet had a parallel in the history of savage warfare, much less in civil Christian strife.—*Daily Morning Chronicle, D. C., Sept. 1, 1864.*

Orders may be sent to Thomas L. Wilson, Fourth Auditor's Office, or to C. Storrs, Chief Clerk, same office. The Book will contain about 300 pages. Price \$1.50.

Mr. Thomas L. Wilson has compiled a mass of valuable and interesting information on the subject of rebel barbarities and the suffering and oppression of Union citizens in the insurgent districts. The facts presented are drawn from authentic sources and worthy of credence.

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August 29, 1864

Printed by McGUI & Witherow, for the Union Congressional Committee.













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